United Nations A/AC.109/2014/18

General Assembly

Distr.: General
26 March 2014

Original: English

Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Dissemination of information on decolonization during the period from April 2013 to March 2014

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 68/96, provides an overview of the activities undertaken by the Department of Public Information to disseminate information on decolonization, with particular emphasis on the options of self-determination available for the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Unless otherwise mentioned, it covers the period from April 2013 to March 2014.

14-27811 (E) 010414

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 2 of its resolution 68/96 of 17 December 2013, considered it important to continue and expand its efforts to ensure the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization, with particular emphasis on the options of self-determination available for the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. To that end, it requested the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, through the United Nations information centres in the relevant regions, to actively engage and seek new and innovative ways to disseminate material to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In paragraph 3 of the same resolution, the Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to further enhance the information provided on the United Nations decolonization website and to continue to include the full series of reports of the regional seminars on decolonization, the statements and scholarly papers presented at those seminars and links to the full series of reports on the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. In paragraph 4 of the resolution, the Assembly requested the Department of Public Information to continue its efforts to update web-based information on the assistance programmes available to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In paragraph 5, the Assembly requested the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Public Information to implement the recommendations of the Special Committee and to continue their efforts to take measures through all media available, including publications, radio and television, as well as the Internet, to give publicity to the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization.

2. The present report, prepared in response to that mandate, covers the period from April 2013 to March 2014.

II. 2013 Caribbean regional seminar on the implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, Quito, 28 to 30 May 2013

3. The Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, also known as the Special Committee of 24 on Decolonization, held its 2013 annual regional seminar in Quito, Ecuador, from 28 to 30 May. The seminar, hosted by the Government of Ecuador, was conducted within the framework of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2011-2020).

4. The Department arranged for the deployment of a press officer from the United Nations Information Centre in Bogota to cover the seminar. The officer provided media support and issued four press releases, which were carried by the Meetings Coverage Section of the Department.

III. Coverage of issues before the General Assembly

Services to the media

5. During the reporting period, the Department press service issued a total of 38 press releases on decolonization in English and French, covering meetings, statements and hearings by various United Nations bodies, including the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

6. United Nations activities on issues related to decolonization continued to be highlighted via United Nations Radio programmes and the multilingual United Nations News Centre portal, one of the most heavily visited segments of the United Nations mega-site. Stories on decolonization, including coverage of such events as the Caribbean regional seminar on the implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, were also distributed through an e-mail-based news alerts service, in English and French, and RSS feeds, as well as on social media accounts, including Facebook and Twitter. The United Nations News Centre stories on decolonization issues were picked up by an array of external websites, including media outlets and news aggregators, and educational and non-governmental organizations.

Unit J Nations website

7. During the reporting period, the Department continued to maintain and update the United Nations and decolonization website in the six official languages (www.un.org/en/decolonization/), adding new content on related issues. Attracting a growing number of visitors, the site registered more than 280,000 page views in the period from April 2013 to March 2014.

8. Activities and issues related to decolonization were also highlighted through a series of special pages maintained by the Department, such as the International Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories (www.un.org/en/events/nonselfgoverning/), which had 12,500 page views during the same period, Global Issues: Decolonization (www.un.org/en/globalissues/decolonization/) and Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples: 50th Anniversary: 14 December 2010 (www.un.org/en/events/decolonization50).

9. The Department also used its accounts on social media platforms to raise awareness about decolonization issues and to drive traffic to the decolonization website.

United Nations Television

10. United Nations Television covered live more than 30 events on decolonization, including all of the formal and open meetings of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), as well as the adoption of the Committee's reports in the General Assembly plenary meeting. Coverage of all of these meetings was also made available live and on-demand on the United Nations Web TV website (http://webtv.un.org).

United Nations Photo Unit

11. The United Nations Photo Unit covered the meetings of the Special Political Committee on Decolonization and related press conferences. It continued to digitize and make available legacy photos showing the historical work of the Organization on decolonization.

12. The United Nations Audiovisual Library provided both photographic and film material to an independent filmmaker in South Africa for a documentary on the independence of Namibia entitled *Paths to Freedom*.

IV. Visitors Services

13. The topic of decolonization, including the roles of the Trusteeship Council and the Special Committee, was regularly included in the narrative of the guided tours of United Nations Headquarters in New York provided by the Department. Information provided by the tour guides in the newly renovated Trusteeship Council chamber focused on explaining to visitors the historical process of decolonization and recent developments.

V. Dag Hammarskjöld Library

14. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library provides research and information services on decolonization and related issues on an ongoing basis. During the reporting period, the Library handled a number of requests for research and information services on this topic. Requests were received from Member States that were tracing their decolonization history, independence and participation at the United Nations. Requests were also received from staff members, researchers and scholars, who wished to make effective use of the rich documentary archives of the Organization, including landmark speeches, treaties, maps, Trusteeship Council reports and other relevant information sources.

15. Through its retrospective digitization programme, the Library continued to digitize and upload important United Nations documents on decolonization to the Official Documents System (ODS) to ensure that an increasing number became accessible through the Internet, while ensuring the preservation of the original versions. During the reporting period, 388 documents (representing 5,846 pages) pertaining to decolonization were digitized and posted on ODS. This includes reports, in various official languages, of visiting missions to Trust Territories and of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, as well as summary records of the meetings of the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly, and of the Committee on Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories, held from 2 September 1948 to 10 May 1963.

VI. United Nations publications

16. During the reporting period, the Department published volume 63 (2009) of the *Yearbook of the United Nations* and continued work on volume 64 (2010). With its comprehensive coverage of the annual activities of the United Nations, including

those related to decolonization, the *Yearbook* presents the work of the General Assembly, the Fourth Committee and the Special Committee, as well as general decolonization issues and the support provided by the Economic and Social Council to Non-Self-Governing Territories. The United Nations Yearbook Twitter account regularly features historical items related to decolonization.

17. The latest (2014) edition of the United Nations primer *Basic Facts about the United Nations* appeared in English during the reporting period. The book documents the contributions of the United Nations to decolonization up to the present day.

VII. United Nations information centres and services

18. Through print, broadcast, electronic and social media, the global network of United Nations information centres continued to raise awareness of the issue of decolonization. It disseminated information materials and promoted the work of the Fourth Committee, often in local languages, to young people, civil society and the media.

19. As in the previous period, the United Nations Information Service in Geneva issued press releases on the work of the Human Rights Council and other human rights treaty bodies and experts that touched on the effects of colonization and decolonization in the context of country reviews. Themes related to decolonization were also addressed during the news briefings of the Service.

20. The work of the United Nations in the area of decolonization was a regular feature of the guided tour and briefing programmes of the United Nations Visitors Services in Geneva, primarily in the context of an overview of the history, main activities and achievements of the Organization. In 2013, the guided tour programme of the Palais des Nations in Geneva, including the new thematic tour on the history of the United Nations, addressed the role of the Trusteeship Council in the decolonization process, welcoming a total of 104,222 visitors and organizing information programmes for 2,293 people. Similarly, 2,799 visitors took a guided tour of the United Nations Office in Nairobi and listened to briefings and lectures on the issue of decolonization.

21. From an educational outreach standpoint, the United Nations Information Service in Vienna produced a compilation of materials designed as guidance for educators to teach students about the work of the United Nations, including the role of the Trusteeship Council.

VIII. Conclusions

22. The Department of Public Information, as the public voice of the Organization, continues to disseminate information about decolonization. Using both traditional and new information and communications technologies, it highlights the need for immediate and full implementation of the 1960 United Nations Declaration on Decolonization. The work of the Special Committee on Decolonization, which is the intergovernmental body devoted to advancing the United Nations decolonization agenda, remains at the centre of the Department outreach activities with media, civil society and educational institutions.